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DARLINGTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

INITIAL HOUSING ELEMENT



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Prepared Jointly By
The City Council, City of Darlington
Planning Commission, City of Darlington
and the
Office of Planning
Division of Administration
Office of the Governor

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ABSTRACT: A summary of housing problems and deficiencies in Darlington; a statement of goals and objectives; and a statement of action-oriented planning activities.

CITY OF DARLINGTON

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INTRODUCTION

The degree of importance that the role of housing plays in our lives is oftentimes not realized until each of us is personally confronted with the task of understanding, first the red-tape measures of purchasing, and afterwards, the perpetual demand of upkeep. In many cases, the situation may be completely out of control before this realization occurs--financial debt will not allow for minor repairs, therefore, deterioration continues. Substandard, blighted homes are the end results.

What do these dilapidated, unsightly areas say about the community? After all, housing reflects the overall welfare of the Community and the well-being of individuals and families. There is a dependency factor between the individual and the community which cannot be denied, and must not be ignored.

The principal step in the resolution of any problem is the realization that a problem does, in fact, exist. It is the intent of this report to identify the housing problems for the citizens of the City of Darlington, determine the obstacles in the path of elimination, and establish present and future objectives and planning activities which could improve the living environment of the community. It will then be up to the individuals of Darlington to join efforts to insure implementation of these activities through community action in cooperation with proven government programs.

PROBLEMS

The principle problems related to housing in the City of Darlington, South Carolina, may be summarized as follows:

1. A large number of substandard housing units exists in the Darlington Planning Area.

Of the 3,760 dwellings in this area, only 1,926 are considered standard. Substandard units represent 48.0% of the total number of dwellings in the Planning Area.

2. The housing stock in the area is old, and its original construction is inadequate. Over 60 percent of the housing units in Darlington were built prior to 1940.
3. The circulation process fails to provide progressively better homes for the lower socioeconomic groups of the community.
4. Maintenance and renovation of the existing housing stock has been inadequate, and the deterioration of the present housing units continues.
5. There are practically no water or sewer facilities outside the City. This is a problem for all fringe area residents, but especially pertains to low income families because of the greater density of their neighborhood. Most, but not all areas inside the City are served by water and sewer facilities.

Housing Value

A fundamental problem of Darlington's housing supply is a lack of construction in the low to medium value range. As shown in Table 1, of the six price ranges used by the U. S. Census to categorize housing values, the largest proportion of owner occupied homes in the City of Darlington falls within the \$5,000 to \$9,900 range. These houses, in most cases, represent the substandard dwelling units in the city. New housing is not being constructed in the under \$15,000 price range rapidly enough to replace the increasing number of substandard units; thus, standard housing is not readily available for the lower economic strata of the community.

Table One reflects the distribution of owner occupied housing for 1960, 1970 by dollar value.

TABLE ONE

HOUSING VALUE - DARLINGTON, S. C.

	1960 Number of Units	1970 Number of Units	Percent Change
Less than \$5,000	357	192	-46.2
\$5,000 to \$9,900	368	341	- 7.3
\$10,000 to \$14,900	196	238	21.4
\$15,000 to \$19,900	47	178	278.7
\$20,000 to \$24,900	36	90	150.0
\$25,000 or more	20	148	640.0
Median Value	\$6,400	\$11,100	

SOURCE: 1960, 1970 Census of Housing

Table Two further indicates that recent construction, between 1965 and 1971, has been in housing intended for medium income occupants, and little construction has occurred to provide standard housing for the low economic strata of the community.

TABLE TWO

VALUE OF HOUSING UNITS CONSTRUCTED
JANUARY 1965 - DECEMBER 1971

	Number of Units City	Number of Units Fringe
Less than \$4,999	12	52
\$5,000 to \$9,999	67	72
\$10,000 to \$14,999	90	195
\$15,000 to \$19,999	12	59
\$20,000 to \$24,999	9	13
\$25,000 to \$30,000	11	12
Total	201	406

SOURCE: Darlington County Tax Office

Although comparable data was not available from 1960 to 1964, either in the census reports or from local authorities; it is evident from the available data between 1965 and 1971, that construction in the fringe areas is occurring at twice the rate of that within the city.

Age and Condition

A survey of the exterior appearance of housing in Darlington reveals that a major portion of the housing stock is old and has never been renovated. According to 1960 Census figures, an alarming 68.8 percent of the housing stock was built prior to 1940, while recent construction has failed to substantially reduce the percentage of older houses (Table Three).

TABLE THREE
AGE OF STRUCTURES - DARLINGTON, S. C.

	Number of Units	Percent
1955 to March 1960	141	6.5
1950 to 1954	195	9.0
1940 to 1949	339	15.7
1939 or earlier	1,485	68.8

SOURCE: 1960 Census of Housing

The age of housing units, in many cases combined with inadequate initial construction and poor maintenance practices, has produced a significant decline in structural conditions. A 1967 windshield survey of housing conditions in the Darlington urban area reveals that only 52 percent of the community's housing structures are in sound condition. Substandard units within the city limits alone comprise 50 percent of the structures. (Table Four).

TABLE FOUR
HOUSING CONDITIONS

	<u>Standard Housing</u>		<u>Substandard Housing</u>		<u>Total Structures</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
City of Darlington	973	49.6	989	50.4	1,962	100
Urban Fringe	731	55.6	583	44.4	1,314	100
Total Urban Area	1,704	52.0	1,572	48.0	3,276	100

SOURCE: Land Use Survey, Office of the Governor, Division of Administration, 1967.

Although no section of the City is exempt from the existence of substandard housing, some areas are unjustly plagued with the effects of severely blighted structures. Significantly, these areas of substandard housing are primarily occupied by non-white residents.

The circulation process has generally failed to encourage the abandonment and destruction of these dilapidated houses. In addition, the propensity of racial groups to cluster together in separate neighborhoods, combined with the fact that blacks occupy the lowest economic strata of the community, prevent the proper operation of the filtering process by discouraging the relocation of blacks into housing units formerly occupied by whites who have moved on to better housing.

Fortunately, there has been minor upgrading of the housing stock in the community due to increased industrial development and the concomitant rise in community income. However, this increased income has failed to generate any substantial housing improvement for most lower income individuals; thus, dilapidated housing, concentrated among the black areas, continues to menace the community.

OBSTACLES

Rising Construction Costs and Tight Money

The national tight money situation, combined with soaring construction costs, has placed new home financing out of the range of many income groups which formerly were able to own their own new homes. Although legal lending institutions do not report that they must turn down a significant number of home loan applications, they do state that they receive very few applications from low or moderate income individuals.

Data Collection and Records

Unfortunately, various agencies of the city and county have failed, in the past, to collect adequate and meaningful housing data. Due to the improvement of city and county records over the past six years, especially, in regard to building permits, some insight is being made into housing conditions and trends, and stricter enforcement of building codes and regulations for new construction is becoming a reality.

Lack of Knowledge for Housing Betterment

Although it is reported that employees have attempted to inform lower income individuals of the avenues available to them for housing betterment, a general unfamiliarity with mortgage loans, how they operate, how to apply, how to repay, etc., exists especially among the black citizens of Darlington. This lack of knowledge, combined with the general uneasiness of low income individuals toward the technicalities of various government programs, serves as an effective impediment to the amelioration of the problem of substandard housing among the populace.

Lack of Local Housing Betterment Program

The City of Darlington is somewhat involved in the inspection and condemnation of dilapidated housing. However, no coordinated effort exists between the County Health Department and the City to classify any structure as unfit for human habitation, nor is there any program presently in operation which actively seeks to relocate those individuals who occupy dilapidated structures.

Inadequate Community Facilities

At present, some fringe areas of the city, especially those high-density neighborhoods occupied by low-income blacks, are without proper water or sewage disposal facilities. Sewage conditions in these areas constitute a major health hazard to residents and add to the already "blighted" conditions produced by dilapidated housing structures.

Most, but not all, areas inside the City are served by water and sewer facilities.

Reluctance of Low Income Individuals to Vacate Present Housing

In Darlington, there is a reluctance among many low-income individuals to vacate housing which they have occupied for many years, despite the fact that better housing may be obtained at comparable cost elsewhere. Because of this "inertia", a sizeable market for low-income housing is not being generated, even though other more objective factors would seem to warrant such a market. The desire to remain in the same neighborhood also seems to influence the housing market in Darlington. This desire to remain in the same neighborhood, coupled with the lack of low-rent housing, fosters a static situation in regard to the housing problems.

Lack of Federal Housing Programs for the Extremely Low Income Family

Unfortunately, aside from Public Housing, which does not exist in Darlington, there are no

federal housing programs to benefit extremely low-income individuals. Section 235 of the Federal Housing Act, and Section 236, and the Rent Supplement Programs all involve monthly payments or base rents which may be beyond the ability of poverty stricken individuals to pay.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the City of Darlington in the field of housing is to provide a satisfactory living environment with a meaningful range of housing choices for all its citizens. The solutions of the problems and obstacles cited above are viewed as intermediate range objectives contributing to the achievement of that goal. Specifically, the objectives are to carry out the following planning activities.

PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Present and Previous Planning Activities

1. Planning Commission Established - The City of Darlington established its Planning Commission in 1966, the duties of which are to carry out a comprehensive community planning program, seek solutions to the major physical, social, and economic problems of the city, and provide for the orderly and desirable development of Darlington.
2. First Phase of Planning Begun - In early 1967, the City of Darlington was funded for its 701 Comprehensive Planning Program. The city's share of the \$18,169.00 cost of the first phase of the program was \$6,057.00. Technical assistance was provided by the Governor's Division of Administration. As a part of the first phase, the city was provided with base maps, land use survey, land use plan, preliminary thoroughfare plan, community facilities plan, public improvements program and a zoning ordinance.

3. Zoning Ordinance Adopted - In May, 1969, the City of Darlington adopted a zoning ordinance and assigned the building inspector with additional enforcement duties as City Zoning Administrator.

In addition, there are several contract programs which are currently underway.

1. Capital Improvements Budget - The city is currently under contract with the Office of the Governor, Division of Administration, for a Capital Improvements Budget. This budget would set forth specific recommendations for the acquisition or construction of capital improvements over a six year period. In addition, a more general schedule of improvements is prepared for a succeeding 14 year period. As a part of this study, an analysis is made of the financial structure and capability of the local government so that the programmed need for capital improvements can be realistically related to the financial capacity of the City.
2. Subdivision Regulations - The recommended subdivision regulations for the municipality shall be designed to guide the platting of land and the development of subdivisions within the municipality's area of subdivision control in order to achieve logical and desirable patterns of development.
3. Initial Housing Element - It is the intent of this report to provide the basic steps towards the realization and alleviation of the housing problem in the City of Darlington.

Future Planning Activities

1. Compilation and Updating of Housing Data - The Building Inspector along with the Planning Commission, in coordination with the County Health Department, should, over the next five years be responsible for the continuation and updating of data collection. A thorough knowledge of the existing housing stock as well as future

housing trends is a necessary adjunct to a proper Housing Plan.

2. Survey of Housing Tools - In order to provide the city with a knowledge of all avenues available for overcoming its housing problems and obstacles, a survey of Federal, State, and Local housing tools should be made. Such a survey should begin immediately and should continue over a five year period. Among its various elements, such a study should include the collection and dissemination of information concerning federal mortgage and credit insurance for residential rehabilitation. Insofar as this portion of the plan will advise homeowners of those avenues available to them for home improvement, it will be of special importance in overcoming residential deterioration.
3. Study of Residential Sales Procedures - The Planning Commission should establish a subcommittee to investigate residential sales procedures and costs. This subcommittee, serving without cost to the city, will over the next five years, serve to inform occupants of substandard housing of the procedures and requirements associated with obtaining financial assistance for improved housing. In addition, it should advise lending institutions of the needs and individual capabilities of the occupants of substandard housing who seek financial assistance in obtaining better housing. Hopefully, cooperation can be obtained from the County Welfare Department and the local Office of Economic Opportunity Staff in the accomplishment of this task.
4. Annexation Study - Some data has been compiled regarding the feasibility of future annexations, increased revenue for the city, and added benefits to those presently outside the city limit boundaries who are without public facilities. The citizens of the fringe areas should be made aware of their option to initiate any further action on possible annexation of their area.

IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

1. Low Rent Public Housing- At present there is no public housing in Darlington, and there are no available HUD funds for such housing this fiscal year. The desired number of units requested were 300, 50 of which were to be for the elderly and 250 for non-elderly. Should such application for funds be approved at a later date, there are five proposed sites under consideration: (1) at the corner of West Broad Street and Washington Street, (2) Both sides of Washington Street at the intersection of Chestnut Street; (3) 3rd Street and Avenue D (4) Between Highway 52 and 401 and Spring Street and (5) Orange and Tedder Streets.
2. In January of 1967, the City Council of Darlington adopted the Southern Building Code, designed to assure a safe and healthy dwelling place for the citizens of Darlington.
3. At present, homes are being constructed in the vicinity of Darlington for people qualified to buy under Section 235 of the Nation Housing Act of 1968. Under this program, administered by the Federal Housing Administration, monthly payments are made to the mortgagee in order to reduce interest costs to as low as one percent on FHA insured mortgages. The degree of FHA assistance is based on the mortgagor's income.

Future Implementing Actions

To further improve the housing conditions of the City of Darlington, the city, along with the Darlington Housing Authority and the Planning Commission should implement the following program over the next five years.

1. Extend sewer services to those areas now lacking those facilities;

2. Cause a survey and study to be made to determine the feasibility of rehabilitating existing residences for public housing use and for private use;
3. Establish a subcommittee of the Planning Commission to study the avenues available for new home and renovation financing, to advise individual citizens on the availability of financial assistance and to carry out those educational activities it may deem necessary to overcome individuals to seek better housing;
4. Continue enforcement of the Southern Building Codes, and, at the same time, establish procedures for a periodic review of all codes in order to insure that they remain responsive to innovations in building materials and techniques;
5. Encourage and seek out more Federal housing programs (such as the F.H.A. 235 programs) that would improve the quality of housing in the city;
6. Initiate a more active prevention of the proliferation of dilapidated structures;
7. The Planning Commission, in cooperation with the County Welfare Department and the Darlington Housing Authority should seek to relocate the occupants of dilapidated housing into public housing, when constructed.

COORDINATION OF THE HOUSING ELEMENT WITH THE TOTAL AGENCY PROGRAM

The housing element will be coordinated very closely with the 701 Comprehensive Planning Program. Zoning regulations, the community facilities plan, and the land development plan will be coordinated with present and future housing. To assure an orderly growth for the community, all of the planning elements will work toward the goals established by the City of Darlington.

COSTS

Hopefully, most of the costs associated with the planning and implementing actions suggested above can be absorbed by existing administrative machinery. A coordination of the

concerted efforts of the Planning Commission, City Zoning Administrator, County Welfare Department, County Health Department, Darlington Housing Authority, and local Office of Economic Opportunity staff can successfully accomplish the tasks leading toward better housing in Darlington. In all cases, however, the Planning Commission should supply the vigorous leadership necessary to ensure the cooperation vital to the attainment of this goal.

METHODOLOGY

This report was completed on the basis on information gathered during interviews with local and federal government officials, loan officers of local lending institutions, staff members of various organizations, and town citizens. This information was supplemented by 1970 data obtained from the 1960 Census of Housing, and a windshield survey of housing conditions.

ENDORSEMENT

The foregoing pages reflect the commitment of the City of Darlington and the Darlington Planning Commission to the resolution of the housing problems of the city.

SCHEDULE OF PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>FIRST YEAR</u>	<u>SECOND YEAR</u>	<u>THIRD YEAR</u>	<u>FOURTH YEAR</u>	<u>FIFTH YEAR</u>
Collection of Housing Data	Absorbed by Building Inspection Department				
Preparation of Market Analysis	To be negotiated but expected to cost between \$3,000 to \$5,000.				
Study of Sales Procedure	Absorbed by Housing Authority				
Study Feasibility of Rehabilitation of Existing Units	Absorbed by Housing Authority				
Review Credit Policies and Citizen Education	Citizen Advisory Committee				
Updating Housing Element	No Local Cost				
Comprehensive Planning Program		Annexation Study Pee Dee Regional Planning and Development Council	Public Administration Study, Pee Dee Regional Planning and Development Council	Planning Review and Revision Pee Dee Regional Planning and Development Council	Ordinance Review and Revision Pee Dee Regional Planning and Development Council